



New Year's Training Resolutions

By Jay B. Bowden
January 6, 2010

For many of us 2009 was a year we would like to forget. 2010 offers promise and optimism. Many Training Departments are encouraged by budgets, forecasts, and hiring opportunities.

I am going to encourage you to look at this New Year with renewed perspective. Don't just start projects that were on hold, expand existing initiatives, or add to current programs. Put your entire Department under a microscope and ask yourself the following questions:

1. How relevant and "real world" are all the components of your training programs? Does your compliance training concentrate on the regulation or the 'application' of those regulations in the branch? Have you implemented more blended solutions, coaching, and mentoring in your existing training programs? In those training programs that have 'real world' examples, how recent are they? When were they updated? When was the last time the appropriate field staff reviewed your content?
2. How connected is your training to the strategy of your financial institution? Are the key business objectives and the learning objectives related? Clearly there are core values and strategic initiatives. Perhaps even some of those have recently changed. Have your training efforts been realigned? Can you identify how your training program supports or creates positive movement toward the key business objectives?
3. Does your financial institution support training and embrace it? If it does, what are you doing to provide feedback to the institution so it can not only continue to support it, but better understand and help keep your training relevant? If the organization does not support training, what are you doing to remedy that situation?
4. Are you using all modalities of training as efficiently and effectively as possible? Have you fully integrated online, classroom, coaching and mentoring, webinar, and other blended approaches? Is each modality being used cost effectively and is it best to support the learning objectives?

5. Have you estimated the cost benefit of your training? Is there a better, less expensive way to accomplish the same goals? Are training programs being offered because 'they always were'? Or do they have a real cost benefit to the financial institution?
6. Is your training practical and transferable to specific job functions? Can tellers actually use the transaction system when they complete training? Do platform staff who know how to sell? Is there progressive learning support for lenders and back-office personnel as well as retail? Does your management training support the actual management job, or just the traditional management theory?

Use these questions as your litmus test as you start the New Year. Identify your weaknesses and make them your new year's resolution to strengthen them. Don't get caught up in the 'activity' of 2010. Instead, make it a springboard to increase training's impact on your institution from this moment forward.